

OAKLAND COUNTY

Walk will raise funds to fight serious food allergies

By JERRY WOLFFE
Of The Oakland Press

At least 500 people are going to meet at Martindale Beach at Kensington Metro Park early Saturday to walk 2.5 miles to raise a hoped-for \$100,000 for research into a cure for food allergies.

The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network Walk for Food Allergy: Moving Toward a Cure, already has \$30,000 in pledges from two major sponsors, SupplyDen of Rochester Hills and Hennessey Capital of Huntington Woods, said Melissa Dalton of Waterford Township, president of the Circle of Food Allergic Families, an advocacy and support group.

Dalton's son, Jackson, 4, has asthma and multiple food allergies. He is allergic to milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame seeds, peas, rice, pork, beef and lamb and also has a rare gastrointestinal disorder called Eosinophilic Esophagitis, which is triggered by some of his food allergies.

"We're always prepared for accidents to happen," said Dalton, adding that she or her husband, William, carry an EpiPen, an antidote that can stop a violent allergic reaction called anaphylactic shock. Anaphylactic shock can shut down the nervous system in moments, causing death, if an antidote is not given.

The purpose of the walk is to educate the public about allergies, said Dalton.

"Educating the people around us is paramount since there is no cure to allergies," she said. "We also have to educate the food-allergic child not to accept food from other people or trade food at school."

Dalton said that, as of Jan. 1, state law allows school-age children to carry an EpiPen auto-injector for when they

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How to help

To join the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network Walk for Food Allergy: Moving Toward a Cure walk-a-thon, call Melissa Dalton at (248) 363-1123 or (248) 821-1343. There are about 70 corporate sponsors for the walk, which will be led by Ken Daniels, the play-by-play voice of the Detroit Red Wings on FSN Detroit.

start to have an allergic reaction, but her son is too young to carry the auto-injector.

She said her son "eats a lot of chicken and turkey" and, when the family goes out to restaurants, Dalton asks the chef what the specific ingredients and spices are in the foods Jackson will eat.

Dalton said it takes her at least three hours to shop for groceries because she must read the labels of everything she buys to make sure none of the items contain anything that could set off an allergic reaction in Jackson.

She said Jackson has some swelling in his throat, at times, from the Eosinophilic Esophagitis.

"It can be painful (for him) to eat and swallow," she said, adding that he is in remission and his disease has been managed by diet.

Dalton is president of The Circle of Food Allergic Families, a support and advocacy group she helped create in June 2004. It has since grown to about 140 members.

She said that, typically, allergies to milk, egg, wheat and soy can be outgrown, but fish and peanut allergies are considered lifelong allergies.

Some 12 million Americans have food allergies, and peanut allergies have doubled in recent years.

Ninety percent of allergic

reactions to food are caused by milk, eggs, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish and shell fish, Dalton said.

She said she "typically cooks a meal for the whole family, but I have to be careful."

Jackson, who has received emergency treatment for allergic reactions more than once, wears a medic alert bracelet that identifies his condition for emergency personnel.

He will enter Beaumont Elementary School in Waterford Township this fall, Dalton said of her son.

"He's already reading labels," Dalton said.

"Sometimes, he needs help, and when I read them, the results are disappointing because he can't eat something he wants, but you learn to live with it."

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